

figures are in lavishly illustrated books dealing with Recent cowries and provided seemingly for their curiosity value. As Pacaud (BZN 61: 40–41, para. 2) has confirmed, specimens of this strange, morphologically and systematically poorly known cowry are rare both in France and England. This is important given the current very poor understanding of this genus and lack of recent work dealing with it. Therefore, priority should be maintained in this case. Indeed, it is likely that applications such as this, if upheld, will serve to diminish the Principle of Priority and might lead to petty arguments over the relative frequency of use of competing names in the literature. This is not what any of us, least of all the Commission, should usefully spend time evaluating.

It follows, therefore, that to give precedence to the junior name would be premature and for that reason I recommend that the Commission should not approve the proposals in BZN 59: 174.

Comment on the proposed conservation of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861 and *Goniobasis paupercula* Lea, 1862 (Mollusca, Gastropoda) by designation of a neotype for *M. curvicostata*

(Case 3232; see BZN 60: 109–112, 300–302)

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In addition to my earlier comment (BZN 60: 302), the contents of the original publications of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861 and of *Melania densicostata* Reeve, 1861 require a discussion.

1. In their application in 2003 (BZN 60: 109–112) Thompson & Mihalcik state: ‘the original figures and descriptions of both nominal taxa are virtually identical’. Contrary to this statement, the original text contains eight differences between the two species. The original descriptions (complete, but not necessarily in original order) are quoted here:

Melania curvicostata: shell ovately turreted, livid-olive, encircled towards the apex with a reddish line; whorls convex, longitudinally plicately ribbed, ribs curved, gradually fading towards the aperture; aperture ovate, slightly effused at the base interior tinged with purple.

Melania densicostata: shell subulately turreted, burnt-olive; whorls eight to nine, rather flat, the last obtusely angled; longitudinally densely plicately ribbed; ribs stout and comparatively straight ending abruptly on an obtuse angle of the last whorl; aperture rather small, ovate, interior very faintly tinged with purple.

The original figures show, very clearly, *Melania curvicostata* Reeve with curved ribs and convex whorls, and *M. densicostata* with more closely spaced straight ribs, flat whorls and a subangular periphery of the last whorl, just as the two syntypes figured by Thompson & Mihalcik. The applicants attribute these two syntypes to two different species, which supports Reeve’s original taxonomic judgement, contrary to long-held views in the subsequent literature.

2. The original illustration of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve is not significantly different from the syntype figured by Thompson & Mihalcik (BZN 60: 112, fig. 1). It has one more apical whorl preserved, but when this is removed, the height and width are very similar to the figured syntype. Only the relative height of the last whorl is less in the original figure than in the photographed specimen. Making allowances for individual variation and / or perhaps minor inaccuracies in the drawing, there is no reason to suppose that Reeve figured a different species than that represented by the extant syntypes. In any event the figure does not represent the species to which Thompson & Mihalcik want to apply the name *curvicostata* Reeve. Consequently, there is no reason to suspect a 'composite' type series. An important part of the case presented by Thompson & Mihalcik, and of comments (1)-(5) in BZN 60: 300-302, is thus based on the incorrect assumption that the original figure of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve is a species different from the extant syntypes of this nominal species.

3. Thompson & Mihalcik wish to apply the name *Melania curvicostata* Reeve to a species which is not conspecific with the extant syntypes of that species, nor does it agree with the original description and figure. To achieve this, the existing syntypes would have to be set aside and a neotype be designated under the plenary power. The plenary power would have to be invoked further to rule that the name *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861 is not invalidated by its senior primary homonym *Melania curvicostata* Melleville, 1843. This course of possible action is arbitrary in every respect and should be avoided. Instead it is here suggested to apply the name *Melania densicostata* Reeve to the species which Thompson & Mihalcik wish to name *Melania curvicostata*. Although the specific identity of the syntypes of *Melania densicostata* cannot, according to the applicants, be determined unequivocally, their recognizable characters agree with those of '*Melania curvicostata*' sensu Thompson & Mihalcik. Such a situation is not uncommon in the Gastropoda and is usually dealt with by a 'consensual redefinition' of the nominal species in question. If a more formal and definitive fixation of the taxonomic concept is required, the syntype series could be set aside and a neotype be selected. Workers familiar with the species may wish to decide on this question; if a neotype is deemed to be necessary, a complete animal may be preferable to a shell.

4. Thompson & Mihalcik state that the syntypes of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve were sent to Cuming by John G. Anthony with manuscript labels stating their locality as 'Florida, United States'. However, Reeve stated unequivocally that he sent Cuming's material to Anthony: 'this species,' says Mr. Anthony to whom it was sent for examination 'is, I think, entirely new, and a beautiful one it is, too; call it *curvicostata*'. It is not known from where Cuming received his material in the first place, but it is unlikely that Reeve would have sent it back again for examination, had Anthony sent it to Cuming. It follows that Anthony was probably not responsible for an erroneous locality attributed to this species.

5. *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861 is a junior primary homonym of *Melania curvicostata* Melleville, 1843 (p. 94, pl. 4, figs. 10-12). *Melania curvicostata* Melleville has been considered as a species in *Faunus* (*Melanatria*) by Cossmann (1909, p. 161), and Cossmann & Pissarro (1910, pl. 19, figs. 117-118); and as a species in *Melanatria* by Wenz (1929, p. 2620), Le Renard & Pacaud (1995, p. 102) and Pacaud & Le Renard (1996, p. 156). Deshayes (1862, p. 453, 1864, pl. 23, figs. 33-35) redescribed

the species as *Melania curvicostata* without any reference to Melleville, 1843, and attributed authorship to himself. His taxonomic concept and stratum typicum are identical to those of Melleville, 1843. Subsequent workers have attributed the species to Melleville (1843) and correctly treated Deshayes's publication as a redescription of Melleville's species, rather than the introduction of a new nominal species.

6. A modern taxonomic revision of *Melania curvicostata* Melleville, 1843 is still outstanding. The attribution to *Melanatria* Bowdich, 1822 is rather doubtful. Although the two homonymous species are far apart in geography and geological age, it is by no means certain that they cannot be congeneric. The shells are not strikingly different, and there are many examples of faunal relationships in non-marine mollusks in the Tertiary of Europe and North America. Thus application to the Commission for a ruling under the plenary power on the priority of primary homonyms not considered congeneric after 1899 (Article 23.9.5) appears premature in this case.

7. The applicants and the commentators have expressed a preference to maintain the name *Goniobasis paupercula* Lea, 1862 instead of *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861. This can be achieved simply by rejecting *Melania curvicostata* Reeve, 1861 as a junior primary homonym of *M. curvicostata* Melleville. A consequence is that the species called *Melania curvicostata* Reeve by Thompson & Mihalcik has to be given another name, and it is here proposed to apply the name *Melania densicostata* Reeve, 1861 to that species. I therefore submit the following alternative proposals to the Commission in place of those submitted by Thompson & Mihalcik.

8. The International Commission on Zoological Nomenclature is accordingly asked:

- (1) to place on the Official List of Specific Names in Zoology the following names:
 - (a) *curvicostata* Melleville, 1843, as published in the binomen *Melania curvicostata*;
 - (b) *densicostata* Reeve, 1861, as published in the binomen *Melania densicostata*;
 - (c) *paupercula* Lea, 1862, as published in the binomen *Goniobasis paupercula*;
- (2) to place on the Official Index of Rejected and Invalid Specific Names in Zoology the name *curvicostata* Reeve, 1861, as published in the binomen *Melania curvicostata*, (a junior primary homonym of *Melania curvicostata* Melleville, 1843, and a senior subjective synonym of *Goniobasis paupercula* Lea, 1862).

Additional references

- Cossmann, M. 1909. *Essais de paléoconchologie comparée*, 8. 248 pp., 4 pls. Cossmann, Paris.
- Cossmann, M. & Pissarro, G. 1910. *Iconographie complète des coquilles fossiles de l'Éocène des environs de Paris*, 2. Pls. 10–25. Paris.
- Deshayes, G.P. 1862. *Description des animaux sans vertèbres découverts dans le bassin de Paris . . .*, 2. Pp. 433–640; 1864, Atlas with 64 pls. Paris.
- Le Renard, J. & Pacaud, J.-M. 1995. Révision des mollusques Paléogènes du bassin de Paris II—Liste des références primaires des espèces. *Cossmanniana*, 3(3): 65–132.
- Pacaud, J.-M. & Le Renard, J. 1996. Révision des mollusques Paléogènes du bassin de Paris IV—Liste systématique actualisée. *Cossmanniana*, 3(4): 151–187.